

preaching. It was his avowed object to make people attach more importance to the pulpit than to the Sacraments.¹ The Church, on the other hand, both theoretically and for practical purposes of self-defence, laid more stress on the Sacraments which she administered; she regarded preaching with more and more coolness as it became the special weapon of the reformer. These rival theories appeared in exactly the same form in the religious controversies of the sixteenth century, and for exactly the same reasons. The pulpit was the battery of the reformers, the Sacraments were the rock of the Church, in the time of Hugh Latimer as in the time of Wycliffe. But, although the reformers of the fourteenth century called for more preaching, they never stated, as has been sometimes supposed, that there was no preaching in the Church at the time. Wycliffe's only complaint was that the prelates did not encourage it. Most parsons, within the limits set by individual ability and energy, preached to the people.

Although their discourses were generally on the points and formulas of Church doctrine mentioned above, a well-instructed priest explained and enlarged his text by quotations from the Bible and the Fathers. Those sermons which have come down to us give proof of the preacher's great familiarity with the Bible, a familiarity not limited to the New Testament or to a few of the books of the Old, but extending all through the Scriptures." But this knowledge was the knowledge of the Latin, not of the English Bible it was the knowledge of the priest who preached, not of the people who listened. The importance of this special training given to the better-educated priests of the later Middle Ages must not be underestimated. It was their familiar knowledge of the Latin Vulgate that made it natural and possible for Wycliffe to claim for the Bible pre-eminence as a spiritual authority. The Lollard acceptance of this new criterion of truth was followed by the later Protestant reformers. The influence of the Bible on modern religion has been even greater than the influence of Greece on modern art; but while Greece was rediscovered at the Renaissance as a thing new even to the

¹ *Opus Bvangelicum*, I 875; *Pol. Works*, I 201,

^f *Norwich Medieval Sermons*, 185; Chaucer's *Parson's*